MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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PUBLIC HEARING

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THURSDAY
MAY 30, 2019
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The Montgomery County Planning Board met in the Montgomery County Planning Department Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland, at 7:00 p.m., Casey Anderson, Chairman, presiding.

PRESENT

CASEY ANDERSON, Chairman
GERALD R. CICHy, Commissioner
NATALI FANI-GONZALEZ, Commissioner
TINA PATTERSON, Commissioner
ALSO PRESENT
ALISON GILLESPIE, Individual
ANDY BANKS, West Forest Glen: Americana Finnmark,
Community Association Representative
BRIAN DITZLER, Sierra Club Montgomery County,
Other Group Representative
CATHERINE COELLO, Maryland National Capital Park
and Planning Commission, Clerk
CHERYL GANNON, Individual
ELAINE ROECKLEIN, Individual
GEOFF GERHARDT, North Woodside Citizens
Association, Community Association
Representative
GWEN WRIGHT, Maryland National Capital Park and
Planning Commission, Planning Director
JILL MATTHEWS, Adjacent Property Owner
LISA TUVALO, Individual
MATT MILLS, Maryland National Capital Park and
Planning Commission, Acting Principal
Counsel
MAX BARNHART, Individual
MELISSA WILLIAMS, Maryland National Capital Park
and Planning Commission, Senior Planner
MICHAEL BROWN, Maryland National Capital Park and
Planning Commission, Supervisor
MICHAEL DUTKA, YIMBY MoCo, Other Group
Representative
MICHELLE FOSTER, Friends of Forest Glen and
Montgomery Hills, Other Group Representative
NANCY WISDO, Individual
PETER GRAY, Washington Area Bicyclist
Association, Other Group Representative
PETER FRANDSEN, Individual
PHILIP OLIVETTI, Linden Civic Association,
Community Association Representative
ROBERT KRONEBERG, Maryland National Capital Park
and Planning Commission, Deputy Planning
Director
SHELDON FISHMAN, Individual
TED MARTIN, Individual
THERESA JONES, Individual
VALERIE GRUSSING, Forest Estates Community
Association, Community Association Representative
CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay, welcome everybody. We're going to get started. And before we turn to our staff to talk about the plan specifically, I just wanted to take care of some housekeeping items.

Those of you who have been here before now that I don't like to cut people off, I like to give everybody a chance to say their piece. The flip side of that though is we really need to keep things moving along if everybody who signed to testify is going to get the chance.

So it's not about our convenience, it's really about yours. We don't want to keep you were until 10:00 or 11 o'clock at night.

So if you could all try to keep your testimony right around the three to four minute range, we'd really appreciate that. And if you have other things to say or things that you think of until later, we're going to keep the record open until when, Melissa?
MS. WILLIAMS: June 5th.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: June 5th. So you'll have until June 5th to submit comments in writing, by email.

And you can talk to Melissa or Michael or any of the people around and they can tell you how to email us and make sure those comments are not only entered into the record, but Staff will go through all of them and respond to them and present them to us at the first work session. Okay?

So if everybody could just help us out by keeping your comments concise, but we don't want to limit what you communicate to us, so we have other ways of doing that if you need more than the amount of time that's available to speak time. Okay?

So I'm going to call everybody up in groups, in the order in which they were signed up. So if we could get Philip Olivetti, Geoff Gerhardt, Andy Banks, Peter Gray, Michael Dutka and Michelle Foster for starters, that would be
good.

MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, I just need to --

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Oh. And while everybody is coming up to the table, Melissa is going to make her introductory remarks.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. Melissa Williams for the record. This is a public hearing on the public hearing Draft Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills Sector Plan, which was advertised in the Washington Times on April 30th, 2019.

The draft plan is in amendment to questions of the approved and adopted 1989 master plan for the communities of Kensington Wheaton, as amended.

The 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan as amended and the 2000 North and West Silver Spring Plan as amended.

It also amends the general plan on wedges and corridors for the physical development of the Maryland Washington Regional District in Montgomery, and Prince Georges Counties as amended.
The 2013 county-wide transit quarters functional master plan, the master plan of highways and transit ways as amended and the 2018 bicycle master plan.

I would like to enter into the public record the following documents. The approved and adopted 1989 plan for the communities of Kensington Wheaton, the 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan, the 2000 North and West Silver Spring Plan, the General Plan on wedges and corridors, the 2013 county-wide transit quarters functional master plan, the master plan of highways and transit ways, and the 2018 bicycle master plan. And all of those are as amended.

We also need to enter the public hearing draft Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills Sector Plan that is dated April 2019.

And the accompanying technical appendix, which is a resource document and is not a part of the sector plan. The appendix includes the economic analysis by partners for economic solutions, a rental facility conditions analysis,
traffic analysis, Georgia Avenue study, park facilities evaluation, urban design concept and development scenarios, the Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills demographic profile and historic resource evaluations.

We also have a letter transmitting the public hearing draft plan to the County Council President, Nancy Navarro, with a receipt date stamp of May 2nd, 2019.

A letter transmitting the public hearing draft plan to County Executive Mark Elrich, with receipt date stamp of May 2nd, 2019, a copy of the newspaper ad from the Washington Times, which is a certified proof of publication in the April 30th, 2019 issue.

All written testimonies received on the plan since the opening of the public record. It opened on April 30th, 2019.

And finally, as noted earlier, staff recommends that the public record remain open until June 5th, 2019 at the close of business.

And that completes my comments.
CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you. Let's get right to it. Mr. Olivetti.

MR. OLIVETTI: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: If you just hit that button until it turns red.

MR. OLIVETTI: You want me to turn red or the button turns red?

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: What color you are is not a condition.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: The microphone has to be red.

MR. OLIVETTI: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight.

I'm here representing Linden Civic Association, president of the group. Linden Civic, about 450 households on the west side of Georgia Avenue between, approximately between the Beltway, Seminary Road all the way down to Brookeville. It's about 450 homes.

I'm here, I had a long presentation
incasing, and I'm having problem with my eyes, contacts, so I can't read. So you're fortunate. But I do want to go on record saying the Linden Civic Association does strongly support the proposed sector plan. Forest Glen, Montgomery Hill Sector Plan.

We think overall it's a very good document. Your Staff was extremely helpful throughout the process in working with communities, working, making sure the process was as transparent, and as helpful as possible.

So I want to thank everyone here for the wonderful staff work. And, again, I want to again say, our support, and certainly our support, I live in Montgomery Hills.

In fact, I live in the sector plan area. George Avenue, while it's one section of this sector plan, but certainly the vision of Georgia Avenue being redeveloped, redesigned, is a, we see it as a major part of this entire process.

And we know that SHA and state
agencies develop plans, hopefully we'll get them funded so that we can go on with the vision of getting Montgomery Hills, Forest Glen, to be where it should be.

Finally, I think that my wife would be a little remiss if I did not mention the fact that, while I use, I'm one of those 84,000 vehicles on Georgia Avenue, but my wife uses public transportation. Takes the bus to Silver Spring or to Wheaton, wherever she's going.

And when she does, I can be, I know I'm going to receive, when I come from work, her comments about the state of Georgia Avenue, the state of getting, walking to Georgia Avenue, the state of the neighborhood, the difficulty and just the inability for someone to age in place.

And while we've been in our residence, our home a little bit over 33 years, we want to continue to age in place, and we will. Certainly Georgia Avenue and the streets surrounding Georgia Avenue make it, what, a challenge for people to get around.
So, my time is up, thank you very much
for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you	onight.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thanks, Mr.
Olivetti, for coming. Mr. Gerhardt.

MR. GERHARDT: Thank you. Good
evening. My name is Geoff Gerhardt. I'm here
tonight as the vice president of the North
Woodside Citizens Association, and co-founder of
the Friends of Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills.

My message to you tonight is simple.
I and the neighbors, I've talked to at length
about this plan, support a better future for
Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen envisioned by
the draft sector plan.

To its great credit, since the 1970s
the Planning Board has put forth, forward
numerous proposals to transform Georgia Avenue
into an urban boulevard that would help transform
Montgomery Hills into a vibrant commercial and
residential area, that balances the needs of
residents, local business and commuters.
Unfortunately, that vision has languished on a shelf for lack of a political will and funding needed to make it a reality.

As a result, the Montgomery Hills corridor has one of the highest vehicle accident rates in the city. It's a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and many local businesses struggle with lack of accessibility and functionally obsolete penalties.

I and many of my neighbors, think it's time try again to fix Montgomery Hills. Which is why we strongly support the sector plan before you tonight.

While there are many good proposals in the plan, I want to draw attention to a few that North Woodside residents are particularly supportive of.

One of the most important features of the plan is to eliminate the confusing and dangerous reversible lane on Georgia Avenue and build a median along the roadway.

The median will make it easier for
pedestrians to cross the road, prevent cars from making dangerous mid-turn, mid-block turns, and improve traffic flow by creating left turn bays at key intersections.

North Woodside citizens association also supports efforts to improve walkability by making sidewalks wider and better protected from vehicle traffic.

We support plans to build a dedicated bicycle lane along Georgia Avenue and improve cycling routes throughout the area.

We support the proposal to improve traffic flow by redesigning the beltway interchange. And we support aligning Southbound 16th Street with Northbound 16th and eliminating the slip lane.

We strongly support turning the part owned by the State Highway Administration at 16th Street into a multi-use recreational area.

We also generally support efforts to foster economic development and affordable housing in the area through zoning and land use.
changes. However, care should be taken to ensure that any proposed redevelopment fits the size and scale of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Thank you for your attention tonight and thank to you and the dedicated Staff at the Planning Department, for your efforts to fix Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: I should just, I haven't don't it yet, so I'll get ahead of it, but I apologize in advance for mispronouncing somebody's name. I don't think I've done it yet but I know I will. So, sorry ahead of time.

Andy Banks.

MR. BANKS: So, I have a, excuse me, I have a procedural question. I think I'm on two lists.

There's an opportunity to sign up as a group, which I did. And it said in that, that there was ten minutes for the leader, I drew the --

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: For the amount of
time you get is at my discretion --

MR. BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: -- and what I've said is everybody is getting, I'm not trying to be rude throughout this but if I gave all the community groups ten minutes, we'd be here all night.

MR. BANKS: I just didn't know. It said that I had ten minutes and I prepared for ten minutes, but that's okay. If that's the new rule --

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: I'm sorry, we just have to do --

MR. BANKS: -- then that's okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: -- when we have this many people at the hearing.

MR. BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: So, go ahead. And of course, you can submit additional comments, just --

MR. BANKS: It's fine.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you.
MR. BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you for understanding.

MR. BANKS: I appreciate it. My name is Andy Banks, I'm the chair of the community relations committee of 420 residents and 319 units.

I'm the epicenter of the plan at the intersection of Forest Glen and Georgia Avenue, and I'm here with a group of people who will also be testifying. I'm one of the people I'm with is our president, Nancy Wisdo, who you'll hear later.

Our neighbor just to the west of us is the famous eight acre Forest Glen Metro Station parking lot. And the metro parking lot is currently zone for single-family homes and townhouses, but the Parks and Planning Department is proposing that the entire parking lot be re-zoned to 120 foot high mixed use resident buildings with the ground floor reserved for retail and commerce.
County planners are proposing that most of the projected 2,200 upscale high-rise apartment units, with its projected 3,500 residents, will be packed into the metro lot, and a four acre medical center property, our neighbor to the east. They propose that those four acres also be re-zoned to the same 120 foot.

So we have been active in the planning process and we have attended a lot of the meetings and we just want to know that we've been very, very active in trying to keep up with stuff.

But on April 24th, 2018, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed a groundbreaking equity resolution. And the equity resolution committed the county council to enact a policy and legislation to make sure all county, Montgomery Counties operations were operating through the lens of equity and inclusion.

The goal of the equity resolution is to end the tremendous disparities that now exist and impede the future prosperity of our people.
because of income, ethnicity, disability, gender
sexual identity and other factors.

    Much of the Park and Planning
Departments proposal emanated from a charrette
for 80 residents sponsored on June 12th, 2018,
only six weeks after the passage of the equity
resolution. The charrette was also attended by
elected and other county officials.

    And our biggest concern is that West
Forest Glen residents, and organizations, were
excluded from this crucial event and that the
charrettes reported recommendations would
devastate our community.

    Much of what you have recommended,
what came out of that charrette and the
organization that was involved in it, has
endorsed 100 percent of it in a recent email
that's been sent around.

    In September, a few months later,
Americana Finnmark volunteers conducted a survey,
our own survey, of the members of our community,
to find out what the members of our community
really wanted done in Forest Glen. Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: I'm not going to cut you off, but if you can wrap it up in the next minute or so that would be great.

MR. BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: If you could hit the high points.

MR. BANKS: All right. I was. Okay.

So --

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Well, rather than recounting the history, maybe you can tell us exactly what it is that you object to about the plan.

MR. BANKS: I object to the fact that there was no equity or inclusion, in that there's the history of Forest Glen, that sector of Forest Glen.

It's the largest most populated area that has the highest diversity rate. Forty-nine percent of its residents are people of color.

We have the highest number of elderly people with disabilities that are often
associated with that.

We have the most housing for, and

almost all the housing in Forest Glen for

affordable people, for affordable housing, is in

our area. In fact, where we live is affordable

housing.

And that there's a long history, which

I know people don't like to hear history, but

history is very important around equity and

inclusion. And that there's been a history of

equity and inclusion.

I've included those remarks in much

for your length in my written testimony. So

that's already on the thing.

But for the public record, we think

being excluded from a key event is wrong and that

we are asking for the Planning Board to

investigate this or the Council to investigate

it, whatever it is. And we want our chance to

have the same chance other citizens had, to have

that level of input that's in a charrette.

By the way, the charrette is supposed
to bring disparate views together to come out with one thing. It's not a thing where you bring people out that you know aren't going to agree with you.

We'd like another process that gives us that same input. Because we have a great plan. And people you'll hear from our group will present pieces of that later. And we think it's a better vision.

It fits our community better and it's very progressive and very, it very much looks into the future, but it answers the things that the people themselves have said that they need.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you. And I know we'll be hearing from other people in the group as well.

COMMISSIONER PATTERSON: Mr. Banks, did I hear you correctly that you will be presenting ideas regarding the plan that represents --

MR. BANKS: Yes. We have a complete
vision, complete proposal. You all should look
in your mailboxes. It's contained in that.

And we would welcome to have some more
assistance from the county to help us develop it
as much as other things that have been developed
with other people. But we think it's a very
good, it's a very good proposal.

COMMISSIONER PATTERSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay, thank you.

Peter Gray.

MR. GRAY: Good evening. My name is
Peter Gray, I am speaking on behalf of the
Washington Area Bicyclist Association. It's
1,500 plus members who live in Montgomery County,
plus the thousands of other county residents who
joined in actions to support better bicycling in
the region.

I also happen to be a 20 year resident
of the Forest States neighborhood. Which is
directly adjacent to this plan.

WABA supports the goals and
recommendations of the sector plan and urges the
Planning Board to follow the Staff recommendations for the medium and long-term configurations of Georgia Avenue, to align with the state highway administrations alternative 5(b) as part of the transportation elements of the plan.

Everybody knows this road is very dangerous. 84,000 vehicles a day, higher than average crash rate.

For a pedestrian or a cyclist to get through that portion of the plan, that ends at the bridge that goes over and under the beltway, through down 16th Street is extremely hazardous.

I'm a very confident cyclist, I have no desire to be on Georgia Avenue. And the great thing about 5(b) is it provides elements that will allow people to, in a reasonable way, bike and walk through that area.

The only other thing I want to say is that this is going to provide a lot of benefits to the county and the state, improve the commuting experience and for people to access
those businesses.

And we are very excited about the changes to come and we applaud the efforts of the Planning Staff and the Board on this planning, thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you.

Michael Dutka.

MR. DUTKA: Hi, I'm Michael Dutka. I just run an informal Facebook group called, Yes in My Backyard MoCo or YIMBY MoCo.

What I'd like to say is that in every planning hearing that I've ever been to there's always somebody who's against the development of housing within their neighborhood. And that can cause huge problems just ballistically throughout our whole society.

Some studies have estimated that 50 percent of our economic growth has been cutoff just because of local zoning controls.

We have big problems in the future. Climate change is one of them. One way to attack climate change is to get people out of cars, and
how we do that is by allowing them to live closer to work.

It's critical that we actually do this. This is way more important than the character of close-in neighborhoods that are in high opportunity areas, like Montgomery County.

And also, in terms of, I mean, we spoke about it with ability. In terms of equitability, if the supply of available housing is constrained, the price will rise. That's Econ 101.

So, I'm just saying I'm here to be fully in support of the new sector plan and the added density around Montgomery. Around Georgia Avenue. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much for coming. Michelle Foster.

MS. FOSTER: Good evening, my name is Michelle Foster. I've lived on Missouri Avenue for 25 years. I'm a founding member of Friends of Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills and I'm also chair of the Transportation Energy and
I did submit extensive comments that support the plan so I'm not here to repeat those. I urge you to unanimously approve the plan and transmit it to the council for adoption.

But I do have three additional points that I'd like to make for the record. First, I respectfully request that the Planning Board take an active role in convincing SHA to fund the Georgia Avenue improvements.

This is the third plan in 41 years to recommend Georgia Avenue as a boulevard. If we can't get SHA to do these improvements now, we should just stop trying. It would do more harm for the residents and businesses to have hope that the road can get fixed.

Such an activist role may be unusual for the Planning Board, but we don't have the cross words. All of the good planning work will have been for not if the road doesn't get fixed.

Montgomery County will acceded it's
responsibility and plan for future growth to Maryland SHA.

One way that the planning work can take the lead to ensure that Georgia Avenue improvements are number one on the county's transportation priorities list, not number four, not number two, but the number one priority.

I'm not asking to jump the line ahead of the other projects, we have been patient. We just don't have time on our side.

Every report confirms the dangerous conditions and how much the improvements would help. And the best part is that residents, all of the civic associations, the Silver Springs Citizens Advisory Board, WMATA, Sierra Club and local businesses support the improvements.

Second, the problems identified by the sector plan are emblematic of issues faced elsewhere in the country. How can we re-make these car dominated state controlled corridors into walkable transit-oriented sustainable communities?
Redevelopment projects such as Pike Road or White Oak, they're simple. They have large land areas, few property owners and lots of opportunities. Montgomery Hills, this is where the plan gets tough.

There are myriad of obstacles to redevelopment. There is no big money and there is no full-time paid advocate. We need county agencies and elected leaders to solve these issues. The economic well-being and livability in our community depends on it.

Last. I want to make sure that the voices of those that are not here tonight are heard. There are many residents, young families with children, those new to the area, individuals who work evenings, people for whom English is not their first language, small business owners, kids, they'll all benefit from these recommendations.

They support your recommendations to make the community more walkable, improve access to transit, add housing, make room for more
stores and restaurants. They just don't or can't
come to testify at Planning Board hearings but
they are out there.

And then there are future residents
who would love to live in a neighborhood like
ours but they simply can't afford to do so or
they don't have the housing choices to meet their
needs. They need a voice in these deliberations.

We need to make accommodations for
future residents as well as future businesses.
Our transit access here is incomparable.

There are people who would like to
live car free, or can't afford a car, and they
should be able to own or rent a home here. We
are a great location for small or local
businesses that can't afford the higher rents of
downtown Silver Spring or Wheaton.

Please consider their voices in your
deliberations. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very
much. Okay, the next group will be Brian
Ditzler, Peter Frandsen, Alison Gillespie, Ted
Martin, Dan Reed, Seth Grims, neither of whom I see here but maybe I'm missing them.

And we might have room for one or two more, but let's see. I guess we'll go with this group first.

MR. GRAY: Excuse me?

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Yes.

MR. GRAY: I have Dan Reed's comments, can I read them for him?

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: I can't let you read them into the record, I'm sorry. But you can give them to the Clerk and they'll be in the record, and the Staff will respond.

Okay, Brian Ditzler.

MR. DITZLER: Hello, my name is Brian Ditzler. I'm speaking here on behalf of Sierra Club Montgomery. We have 5,300 dues paying members in the county and a far greater number of supporters.

I have submitted written testimony so these comments will be of a higher level and just summary in nature.
We first commend the Planning Staff for what I think is a very comprehensive rapport with very valuable recommendations.

The current Georgia Avenue corridor, as other residents have commented, is stressed in the sector plan as an unattractive, auto-dominated environment that's unsafe for drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, and frankly is a congested mess for commuters and residents alike.

Significant improvements are needed and the proposed sector plan and its recommendation would provide the needed changes.

Sierra Club has endorsed the recommendations contained in the sector plan and we have essentially, because they embody smart growth principles and proposed reasonable and appropriate measures, we've grouped the recommendations that we want to call out into four particular, four areas that we think are particularly important.

First is to encourage safe and sustainable transport. The strong emphasis on
Vision Zero, to improve the safety for all individuals, including drivers, transit users, bicyclists and pedestrians is particularly important.

Equally important is balancing the demands of the infrastructure improvements with the need to enable public transit and safe walking and biking.

The second area to highlight is to improve land use. Much needed transit-oriented development would be enabled by changing zoning to allow high, medium density to multi-unit residential development around Forest Glen Metro Station and commercial, residential and mixed used development in both the metro station and the planned transit stop on Georgia Avenue and Seminary for the future Georgia Avenue South bus transit lane.

So, we can then rethink the zoning that's being proposed is right on target.

Third area, protect the environment.

Which we believe this plan would do. It would
improve stormwater management, improve open space, expand green cover, prioritize tree planting.

It would reduce local energy demand and consumption by supporting the construction of energy efficient buildings.

And I'll digress a second to say, we addressed the Planning Board to have this second plan include both requirements and effective incentives to encourage energy efficiency in buildings.

For example, the Bethesda sector plan, bonus density points were offered to make buildings more efficient and code required. We like that.

I also want to call out that by improvements in traffic, reducing traffic congestion, that will clearly lessen vehicle emissions. Together with improving bus transit, biking and walking will be great improvement.

And finally I'll close, we like that there's a range of housing choices that would be
created. And preserving market rate affordable housing and encourage collaboration with other organizations to develop and expand affordable housing is very important.

So in summary, we support the proposed plan and its recommendations if they embody smart growth principles and are responsive to local community wishes, and they deserve your support.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

Mr. Frandsen.

MR. FRANDSEN: Yes. My name is Peter Frandsen. I moved to Forest States on the East side of Georgia in 1965 and moved into Americana Finnmark condominium in 1980.

But I represent myself here today. And my comments only relate to the immediate intersection of Forest Glen and Georgia Avenue. Americana Finnmark though is one of the largest private green spaces in the area, for which we receive no assistance from the county to maintain it as green.
We're obviously locked into a bad vehicle transportation system no one could have envisioned such developed 75 years ago, so the staff has labored hard to make the best of a bad situation.

But I'm opposed to commercial development at the metro parking lot and the medical arts building. At least intensive development.

For one, the subway station there only has six elevators and limited capacity. And for the record, when it opened, it was the second deepest station in the noncommunist world. It's now about the eighth or ninth thing.

And many of my points are already in letters I sent on March 26th and May 17th.

By Forest Glen, that intersection there cannot handle intense commercial development. When that station opened it was the only residential station in the system and may still well be that. It was intended to be a residential area from the start.
The 1978 Forest Glen sector plan transit impact area and vicinity study said Forest Glen was intended primarily for local residents, parking there is intentionally limited and traffic from the beltway wishing to use Metrorail is directed south to Silver Spring. And so forth and so on. I won't read the whole thing.

This was reaffirmed in the July 1996 Forest Glen sector plan.

That area, that immediate area, should stay residential. I don't think the best like is commercial development. Instead Wheaton and Silver Spring should be the focus of commercial development.

The way the area is structured now, it's very inaccessible. The no left turn is a hallmark in the area. And basically you can't get there from here with the way the traffic is now setup.

It's straight jacketed along Georgia Avenue. The lack of left turns has impeded
development.

Over 20 years ago Carl Freedman's company had talked about developing the parking lot into some kind of air rights building. But one of the impediments, of course, is you can't get there depending on the time of day.

And that's why, one reason why it's not been developed to this day.

So to put two 12 story buildings, which if you stack them together, would be almost half the height of the Washington Monument. To me that seems like pouring gasoline on a bad situation where you already have 80,000 cars a day coming through.

The 12 story buildings don't match the area and would be disruptive of the neighborhood.

Thank you very much.

(Appause.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: We can't really have clapping or booing or anything from the audience. If you want to speak, come up, sign the card, we'll hear you out. But otherwise, we
wind up spending all night because there's so much additional time that's added getting the audience reactions.

Ms. Gillespie.

MS. GILLESPIE: Thanks so much. I own a single-family home in the Forest States neighborhood, which is also near the intersection of Forest Glen and Georgia. I've lived there for about 18 years and I bought my house to be close to the metro, that was my whole point.

And currently, all four of my members of my household use buses in the metro to get around, and I drive to work on the beltway.

For the last 15 years I've been advocating here and elsewhere for moral walkability, including the underground passageway to the metro.

And over the last year and a half or so, I've attended about eight meetings on the sector plan. And during those meetings I have been incredibly impressed by the careful diligence and willingness of the planning staff.
to listen.

And I can confidentially say the planning reflects a tremendous amount of input from the community. And largely reflects what my neighbors and I have been asking for, for the last few years.

I submitted some really detailed comments and I'm just going to hit the highlights because I think that's best for more people to talk. But in general, I want to say that I am really happy about the proposed zoning density at the intersection of Georgia and Forest Glen.

I think we had a rare chance to do the right thing. We have a really good chance to make smart growth happen. And I'm super excited about that happening in my neighborhood.

I think that that's exactly where we ought to have the density. And I think there are a lot of people who would live there and use the metro and it would be great.

I'm also really excited to see the inclusion of lots of affordable housing in this
plan. That's really important to me and it's something that this county desperately needs.

I'm really hopefully that we can also use that space to provide something that is really missing in our neighborhood that causes a lot of unnecessary driving traffic, and that is the small retail, transformative daycare and restaurants and coffee shops at the metro.

It's weird that it's not in our neighborhood and I think that would be great and it would be transformative. And certainly it would solve a lot of driving in my own house.

I also like the recommendations for trees and green roofs. And as Mr. Ditzler said, I would not lessen those numbers.

I think it's important, well, that wasn't what you said, you said we should be equitable with Bethesda, and I'm going to piggyback on that and say I agree.

I think it's important to aim for 35 percent green cover. And I know there's been some discussion about bringing that down, but
please don't do that because it dooms us to be second class to Bethesda forever.

If we lessen that number, we risk becoming also second to them in terms of the environmental aspect. And we know there's a lot of developers out there excited and lots of, no reason that would deter anyone in this particular metro area.

I also really like the main street grid. I love the reversible, getting the rid of the reversible lane and putting in a median.

There are two things I'm unhappy with that are very small. One, I really was unhappy to see a suggestion and put more town homes on Forest Glen. And where it's a mirror, what's on the other side of Forest Glen, that really made no sense to me.

What's on the other side of Forest Glen is the backside of some town houses that were built recently. They're very nice houses. I actually have friends that live there, but there's no aesthetic to be near it, it's just two
fences that face the street. So I wouldn't do that.

I think that would limit the developer from being really creative with open green space, and I would hate to see that. I think we should let them do whatever they can with that open space.

I only have one other comment, is it okay to go on with that? I hope.

I really don't like the idea of the Urban Ecology Center for the Silver Spring Health and Human Services building over here.

I, back on December 8th, had submitted a letter. I feel weird saying this because I actually volunteer at a nature center every month and I love nature centers, no one is a bigger supporter of nature centers than me or nature than me, however, we desperately need a school.

And since last year when we started looking at the plans, I keep looking at it saying, that could be a magnet school. Transit only magnet school where you opt in and you know
you're going to walk and take transit.

We can have culinary arts or media arts program there for high schoolers. I think people from all over the county can easily get there. There is no need for a bus loop.

As much as it pains me to say no to nature, let's make that a school. And I know MCPS is hard to work with, but come on, you guys can lead the way.

(Laughter.)

MS. GILLESPIE: So, anyway, thanks so much and I'll stop there.

COMMISSIONER CICHY: Excuse me, what was your name again?

MS. GILLESPIE: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Alison Gillespie.

COMMISSIONER CICHY: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much. Ted Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Alison Gillespie opposes nature.

(Laughter.)
MR. MARTIN: My name is Ted Martin.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: That's my takeaway from it.

MR. MARTIN: My name is Ted Martin.

My family of four lives in Forest Estates. For the ten to the last, up to 15 years that we've lived there I've served on the neighborhood community association.

I've loved my neighborhood for all the 15 years I've lived there and I enthusiastically support this plan. Because of this plan, this plan has to be more excited about the future of my neighborhood then I've ever been.

A little bit on the neighborhood, if I could. We have amazing walkability inside our neighborhood.

We have the street grid, we have sidewalks everywhere on both sides, which is fantastic. They're buffered from our narrow streets by tree lines with mature shade trees.

Half the houses don't have driveways so people park on the street. Another buffer.
The result of all this is people walk, walk like crazy inside our neighborhood. You can't go around the block without running into neighbors.

The homes, enough about the neighborhood. The result is that people walk all the time.

There's walkability, and the metro, which is right there, is what attracted my family. It's what attracted my experience and then the many, many dozens of families and people and couples who I've met, who have moved into the neighborhood through my community activity.

It's what attracted them to the neighborhood. Urban oriented, walkability wanting people who are near metro. We have that awesome theme town inside of our neighborhood.

Here is why I love this plan though. We have no walkability outside of the neighborhood. And worse, we have this in town feel inside our neighborhood but there's no town. There's no commercial main street. There's
nothing we can walk to purchase.

    Save our every Sunday morning farmers
market in Bay Park that the community itself
supports and works. My daughter works there
every Sunday.

    And it is hugely popular because it's
the only thing that people can walk to and buy
Sunday morning, 9:00 to noon.

    I live within a half mile of an
underground heavy rail subway station, even
closer to the new feature entrance, and our walk
score is 35. That's amazing.

    That wouldn't be possible without the
over restrictful single use zoning that has held
the neighborhood back.

    Points on the metro by the way, it's
one step from downtown Silver Spring and Wheaton,
it's two stops from town park, it's seven stops
from the Capitol and the core of D.C., yet, next
to its entrance are parking lots. On our side is
a mostly empty parking lot and an aging medical
building. Single use.
Nothing at all has been built in Forest Glen for over 50 years. Other than a new patient wing of Holy Cross Hospital. Which, by the way, is over 120 feet tall.

I worry that the urban oriented people who have bought homes in my neighborhood for the last decade and a half, two decades, I worry that they'll stop coming. If the county continues to restrict retail activity, if the economy doesn't adapt toward walkability and mix use the way nearby jurisdictions are, I worry they'll stop coming to my neighborhood.

I'd like to highlight the medical buildings on the northern edge of the plan area. By Dennis Avenue and Medical Center Park.

There are three different properties. They're all single use medical building. They don't serve our neighborhood other than my dentist is there. That's the only thing that's there.

Those property owners, according to the plan, they've indicated that they want to
pursue opportunities to complement their current single use medical operations with small retail uses, such a coffee shop, a pharmacy. Please let this happen. This would serve the neighborhood.

Importantly, my neighbors, myself, we fully understand that the plans, visions and goals, which I wholly support, they can't come to fruition without some increase in our law density, without allowing building heights that are barely taller than a few stories, which is all that are called for in this matter. It could be higher in my opinion.

That is fine, it's okay. People need a place to live. On top or adjacent to the most underlined utilized metro stations, far better plan than elsewhere.

Please approve this plan, please allow us to have our coffee shop and thank you.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you. Okay, I think we'll take like a, just a two minute break, but I'm going to call up the next group so
they can get settled.

If we can get Lisa Tuvalo, Nancy Wisdo, Theresa Jones, Max Barnhart and Elaine Roecklein.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 7:43 p.m. and resumed at 7:45 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay, we're going to get started again. So if any conversations can go out in the hallway that would be great. So we can hear our, what folks have to say.

Did you have an order you prefer? Who wants to go first?

MS. ROECKLEIN: Not me. Okay, we ready?

MR. BARNHART: Yes.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Did you want to go first?

MS. TUVALO: Sure.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: What's your name, ma'am?

MS. TUVALO: My name is Lisa Tuvalo.
I live in Americana Finnmark since 1978 and I moved to New York City in 1992 and then I came back in 2009. I've been back and forth to Americana Finnmark because my mother lives there.

And the one thing I have to say is, I like how our community feels like a home, and I don't feel like I live in the middle of a mall. And because I lived in New York City I've seen urban jungles, like Brooklyn, and they don't feel like home to me, they feel like I'm just going to a bunch of stores.

And so my concern is that this place is going to look like Brooklyn. And it's not appealing when you want to go someplace to relax after a stressful day at work.

So, coffee shops and all that are nice, but I'm looking at the big picture. I don't want to see like houses with people in my neighborhood.

It really does change the energy level. And then you also have a fact that there might be a higher crime rate.
I play tennis. I can see park from where I am right now. I don't want a 12 story building where people can look into my complex. Not everybody has good intentions. So that's not a concern of mine.

It's very congested on Georgia Avenue already, anything else you build there, not everybody really is going to use Metro, even if we want them to use it. They're going to keep using those cars and getting off the beltway.

So, just be careful about building tall buildings in my area for that reason as well.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much for coming. Nancy Wisdo or --

MR. BARNHART: I am.

MS. WISDO: I'm going to go last.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: -- whoever is next?

MR. BARNHART: Okay, is it on?

MS. WISDO: Yes.

MR. BARNHART: Perfect. So, I'm going
to go and then we're going to have Elaine, 
Theresa and Nancy speak.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay. If you can 
just introduce yourself and start that would be - -

MR. BARNHART: Yes, perfect. So my 
name is Max Barnhart. I am a lifelong resident 
of Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills born in '93, 
and I'm also a server at Nate's Diner. I hope we 
have some fans in the room.

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: Woo.

MR. BARNHART: One of the best 
business in Wheaton, if not the best. And I'm 
here to present a smart vision for the Forest 
Glen Metro Parking Lot and Medical Center.

There's been this debate, it's sort of 
been narrowed down into either for the past or 
you're for this specific future as a body in the 
plan. And I think there's a middle ground here.

And so, I want to look into, we can 
talk for a long time about how the height blocks 
out the sun for Americana Finnmark concerning
neighbors, but that's not what we need to get into.

The first thing, because we talked so much about how there are all these millennials that want to move here. But if they wanted to move to a place that had all of these amenities, they would be filling up these empty apartments in Wheaton and downtown Silver Spring.

In the apartments economic analysis report that was commissioned by the Planning Staff, they said that rents could be around $1,800, $1,900 for 850 square unit.

And the core apartments on Georgia Avenue, right near Cameron, you can get a one-bedroom studio for $1,500 a month. If someone wants to get an urban area, that's where they're going to go, not to our parking lot.

Furthermore, we talk about what we need economically. In that same economic analysis, they said that the viability for the market was that 360 to 380 units, at a four or five story apartment complex on the lot. And yet
what's being recommended is double that.

With not exclamation other than,

that's appropriate. And that doesn't sit with me. We need to know why this economic study is not what we should be looking to instead of these general grandiose claims about what is the appropriate station.

But when we're looking at Forest Glen, Theresa, when she speaks, is going to speak a little bit more about why Forest Glen is a unique metro station that has unique development constraints when we're talking about density.

Furthermore, the last thing is that it's just plain unpopular. This height, the 12 story height, was opposed to be the survey of 123 units in our building.

And in the last two weeks alone, we circulated petitions specifically about this height and had over 300 signatures in only two weeks. So that goes to show you how people in Montgomery County and in Forest Glen feel about such extremely density.
We want something more reasonable, something that is going to give us the ability to have higher percentage of affordable housing. Something I think everyone here can agree on.

Fifteen percent is nothing. It's really not affordable if the majority of the people aren't living there.

And the recommendation with MPD use only represents 60 percent of median income. That's not even representing real low-income residents, like our teachers, our firefighters, our police officers that can't live in their own county. If we want to give them housing, we need a much higher percentage than 15 percent.

Furthermore, the Washington Post reported, actually just yesterday, or maybe two days ago, that middle-income seniors are losing out. And middle income seniors aren't being catered to by these luxury developments that are being built, they are getting screwed basically because they don't have a place to move to when they need to move out of their larger houses and
don't have their families.

So, giving accessible, maybe first 

floor or at least handicap or stable accessible 
housing there would be a really huge benefit.

But the last thing I really want to 
talk about is what sort of amenities we do want 
to see. Because there's a really great 
opportunity on that lot.

We can see things that actually help 
converse our community. We are the furthest 
point from the two libraries. So if you want to 
go there, you have to metro to Wheaton or Silver 
Spring and then walk a mile. A lot of parents 
don't want their kids doing that.

A satellite library with possible 
spaces for telecommuters or for a start-ups to 
setup and really do that sort of WeWork thing, 
except maybe with some county support, would be a 
really great economic development idea.

Or a daycare so people who want to 
ride the metro to work don't have to drive their 
kids to a daycare they can drop them there, take
the metro down to D.C. and then come back.

Or of course, as everybody loves the small coffee shop. I think everybody can get behind that.

And the last thing, food trucks. We talked a lot about restaurants, but the big problem is in the middle of the day, if people are just transiting and going down to D.C., those business, like a lot of the business in Montgomery Hills, won't have anybody coming in the middle of the day.

Food trucks kind of solve that problem. By coming at particular times, they can come when it's busiest without having to bear the burden of a long day time where there may not be as many people around.

So really, just in summary, I want to say thank you for letting me go a little bit overtime. I want to say that it's a false choice to say that we have to take things as are prescribed here at this exorbitant height.

We can have a smaller developer with
still more density creating a better Forest Glen
for the future. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you. Who is
next?

MS. ROECKLEIN: Good evening. My name
is Elaine Roecklein. I am a longstanding
resident of this community.

I've lived in Americana Finnmark for
18 years. And my roots to Americana Finnmark go
back to 1970. I'm a little older than that, but
I hail from Washington, D.C.

My concern is safety. Vehicular
traffic, pedestrian injuries and so forth. And I
don't hear any argument, I don't believe I have
to convince anyone of that.

All the testimony I've heard prior,
everyone is on the same table with respect to the
traffic, the vehicular accident rate and the
pedestrian accidents and fatalities, severe
injuries and so forth.

My testimony is very personal. A
deep, a neighbor of mine that lived across the
courtyard from me for 16 years was crossing the
to Reedy Drive, which is just on the
southern end of Wheaton, and she had the light,
so she's walking with the crosswalk, she was
struck by a vehicle and succumb to her injuries
about a week later. Her family had to take her
off of life support.

This is really personal to me. I am
concerned that the density proposal for Forest
Glen and the medical building and Forest Glen
Metro Parking Lot, is only going to add to the
increase in traffic.

I mean, what I've seen by my own
research is that the studies actually show that
it can decade to decade to decade. The accident
rate, the severity of the accidents and the
fatality rate actually increase with each decade.

I don't see, and I'm not convinced
that an increase in densities actually is going
to bring those numbers down. So my concern is
with the density proposal of Forest Glen and
Georgia Avenue.
Which brings me to three areas. What I would like to do is invite the Planning Board to please go back to that intersection during peak hours so you can really see that it's worse.

I understand that you were there around 10 o'clock in the morning. The peaks hours would be the rush hour morning or rush hour evening. And then you get a real feel or real sense for how that is at that intersection.

I would like to ask that the Planning Board consider proposing a light at Tilden. That is the street that literally intersects into the Americana Finnmark condo complex.

Not just for residents in our community but because ambulances leaving Holy Cross Hospital avoid the intersection at Forest Glen and Georgia Avenue and they snake their way around in that neighborhood and they come out on to Tilden, so they can easily travel northbound.

We have a myriad of u-turns going on in front of our community, to cause all kinds of backups, fender benders, so forth. And
residents, although we don't have the right and
we don't have safe passage, people are taking
their chances and they're running across that
street to catch the bus, which is directly across
the street heading northbound. That's number
one.

Number two, I would ask that the
Planning Board also consider the passage way
feasibility study. From what I understand, the
entrance is going to accommodate the northeast
side of Forest Glen and Georgia.

Well, everyone that is crossing
Georgia Avenue needs to have safe passage. And
our community has, on that side of our community
have blind residents and disabled folks that are
traveling down from a community home north of us
who are also crossing and going to Holy Cross
Hospital to get some of their services.

Everyone that is crossing at Georgia
and Forest Glen must be protected. So there must
be a way to include that tunnel and bypass our
community or have some kind of safe passage in
place for everyone at that intersection.

And lastly, I would ask that before any density proposals are pushed forward, that something is done about the traffic. The traffic flow, the accident rate and the pedestrian fatalities that are going on that are documented and well established facts. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much. Who would like to speak next?

MS. JONES: That's me. Hello, nice to see you all again. My name is Theresa Jones and I live in Americana Finnmark and I've lived in the Forest Glen area for about 16 years.

I'm speaking tonight to express the kinds of concerns of myself and our community of the capacity of the Forest Glen Metro Station to handled additional daily ridership of 2,000 or more customers as proposed by the sector plan working draft due to their projections for increased density.

The metro station opened, Forest Glen
Metro Station, opened in 1990 to primarily serve customers residing between Wheaton and Silver Spring Metro Stations. It's the only WMATA Station without direct surface access escalators, and it's the deepest in the system, as you all learn today. Six high speed elevators transport customers 21 stories down to the platform level. Because of the lack of the escalators it's the only station equipped with fire doors to protect customers during a train fire. In theory, in case of a fire, the steel doors will come down, sealing the customers from the fire. They can then flee to safety by walking up the 20 story staircase, ride the escalators, excuse me, elevators to the street level, which is not recommended since the elevators will stop working in case of high heat and smoke. Or take a train that would be provided on the other side of the platform. And by the way, fire safety specialists have criticized metros fire evacuation plan at Forest Glen Metro due to the
role of the elevators. Okay.

So, also since opening, the operating condition of the elevators has been a consistent major problem. Quite often one or more of the elevators is broken down.

Worse yet, customers have been trapped in the elevators requiring rescue by the fire department and WMATA elevator techs, which takes about 30 minutes or more. Okay.

WMATA currently has no elevator techs stationed at the Forest Glen Metro Station. They have to travel either from the Wheaton Metro or Silver Spring in order to assist in the evacuation. Okay.

So, the other thing too is that while this station has been consistently characterized as underutilized, this stated was never intended to be, nor does it have the capacity to be a major transportation station handling thousands of passengers a day. Especially in peak comminuting times.

There is little to no room for
expansion of the stations operating capacity.

The concept behind transit-oriented development and more density is that residents will use public transportation.

In this case, this subway system for their transportation needs. However, in the ten years since the advent of TOD, Transit-Oriented Development, in the Wheaton and Silver Spring areas, there has been a consistent decline in metro ridership.

In truth, TOD and its current density has contributed to the traffic congestion and overcrowding in this part of the county. I want to thank you for this time this evening, and I want to say this.

In light of these truths and concerns, I respectfully request the Planning Board to reject the amount of additional residential density at the Forest Glen Metro Station, and the Medical Center, as currently proposed.

We need improvements and development in Forest Glen that are of benefit to this
community, not plans that will further add to the community's wealth. Thank you all very much.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you.

MS. WISDO: My name is Nancy Wisdo and I serve as president of the board of Americana Finnmark.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Would you mind just pulling that microphone a little closer?

MS. WISDO: Sure. Is that --

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: I can hear you, but I don't think the mic is picking it up.

MS. WISDO: Is that better?

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Yes, thank you.

MS. WISDO: Okay. My name is Nancy Wisdo and I serve as president of the board of Americana Finnmark condominiums, right at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen, which essentially is ground zero for this project.

On behalf of my association I would like to thank Chairman Anderson and the Planning Board and Staff for the hard work on the Forest Glen, Montgomery Hill Sector Plan.
As one of my neighbors noted earlier, although we've been characterized as such, we are not against progress in our neighborhood. We want our community to improve and grow while maintaining its character and preserving the quality of life we currently enjoy.

The are many parts of the plan, including some of the aspects that will help make Georgia Avenue a safer place, and we are in favor of most of them. I almost had a really good story to tell, because on the way here going past the Montgomery Hills Shopping Center I came within, I'd say a paint job of an accident when someone was coming out of Montgomery Hills.

I, and a few of my neighbors, join the Planning Staff and Board this morning as they toured the area. And I'm sure they were struck by the amount of noise, traffic and overall congestion even in a non-rush time. You've heard over and over about the fact that 8,000 vehicles travel through that intersection every day.

We would ask that you conduct another
tour, as one of my colleagues said, so that you
can see when it's really at its peak time. And
unfortunately, no one coming this morning had to
look for parking because you would have found out
there isn't any. And it's going to get worse.

So I ask you, is it really possible to
increase the population of our area by almost 50
percent and not affect the quality of life of
those of us that are already living there. In my
case, 33 years

And if the basis for increased density
is maximizing the ridership of the Forest Glen
Station, then that seems to be a non-starter
because of all of what you've heard about the way
that station was actually setup and the fact that
it was meant to be what they call a, I think a
light service station.

Of the 20, 123 households in our
community, most of them ask for an alternative
vision, as you've heard. We have an extensive
testimony that was submitted by Mr. Banks where
you can get into more detail from that. But what
I would like to do is just summarize that, because we do have an alternative vision.

We have an emphasis on maintaining the residential quality of our neighborhood. We ask that you modify the provisions that will contribute to increased density and increased traffic in an already F rated intersection of the fourth busiest artery in the county. Which is Route 97, Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road.

Reduce the size of the buildings considerably down from the 120 feet for the Metro Lot and the building center, or the medical center, focus on family housing rather than one-bedroom units and create neighborhood enhancing amenities. Such as a community center, daycare, green space, park and maintain and increase the small-scale retail that already exists there.

We believe it is possible to have progress that is proportional to our neighborhood and that development can be both smart and reasonable. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify tonight and I look forward
to the upcoming work sessions and the
continuation of this process. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: I just
want to make a comment and a question. I said
this earlier today and I just wanted my comment
to be on the record.

One thing is that, I just want to
recognize Melissa and the Planning Team. They
told us this morning that they actually went back
to the planning and they talked to different
business because they wanted to make sure that
they were aware about this public hearing, and
that speaks a lot about you. And I want to thank
you for doing that.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: So that's
one. And the second thing is that I didn't watch
the Staff.

I am a smart growth advocate, 100
percent. There's no question. Like I support
density in I did Bethesda, when I worked on White
Flint, Strathmore. Specifically where the metro
stations are.

Yet, I do need to understand more
about this issue on capacity for this particular
metro station. Every single metro station that I
have worked on, master plans, have escalators.
This one doesn't have it.

So I did make the request through the
Staff to ask Metro to show the capacity, the
engineering report that they may have had when
they created this station back in the '90s.
What's their maintenance report, what's the
lifecycle for the elevators.

Like, I need to understand all that
because that's connected to that city in this
particular metro station. So, for the work
session I want to see that data so we can have a
productive time here.

MS. ROECKLEIN: Ms. Gonzalez, that
report actually has a name and Sarah --

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: I'm sure
they'll find out what it is.
CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Yes. We'll get into it.

MS. ROECKLEIN: It's dated 1903.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: We'll get into that, where it's at.

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay, thank you all for coming.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Now, the last group is, and please don't applaud, no matter who you're for or against, it really is not appropriate.

Valerie Grussing, Cheryl Gannon, Jill Matthews and Sheldon Fishman. And is there anybody else who thinks they're signed up who I haven't called?

If there is, you need to come forward now or hold peace. At least for purposes of this panel.

Actually, Ms. Gannon was first for
this period, but I didn't call it in that order.

MS. GANNON: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: In terms of who signed up.

MS. GANNON: So go ahead?

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Please.

MS. GANNON: Okay. Good evening, my name is Cheryl Gannon and I'm a 30 year resident of the county. And I've lived in Woodside, which is off South Georgia Avenue, for the last 20 years.

I'm here tonight to offer my support with just a few minor qualifications for the Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills sector plan. In my opinion, it's time for the county to make a meaningful investment in this stretch of Georgia Avenue.

For too long businesses have struggled, pedestrians have been unsafe and there are too few housing opportunities, particularly affordable housing. Improving these areas will bring people here, make the communities vibrant
and help businesses to thrive. Businesses require people to succeed.

The Montgomery Hills stretch, in particular, I find very unattractive. I remember taking my kids when they were young for a short walk up Georgia Avenue to one of the shopping centers. Crossing the streets felt very unsafe. And in general, the speed of traffic, the lack of crosswalks and narrow sidewalks makes it difficult and unpleasant to walk.

We walk downtown Silver Spring regularly, but I never walk north on Georgia Avenue anymore. I resort to my car when only going a few intersections north on Georgia.

Improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists and better metro access will reduce cars on the road and make it a more pleasant and attractive area.

I have two small suggestions. They're not major but I think they're important to me. First of all, Woodside is on the locational atlas, which means that all homes in our section
have to undergo a process of submitting plans to
the HPC for exterior remodeling.

However, because our houses are not
historic, we don't get the tax credit for doing
it. And residents who have been through it say
that it adds time and money and a lot of
headaches to the project, but we don't get the
tax credit.

I'm neutral actually as to whether or
not our neighborhood is designated historic, but
I wish you would resolve it one way or the other.
If we're historic we should get the tax credit,
if we're not going to get the tax credit, we
should have a way of removing the houses, like
mine that was built in 1989, there's not a single
thing historic about it, and remove us from that
process. One way or the other. That's my
request.

My second, I see that there's a
recommendation for a protected crossing noted at
Georgia and Noyes. I favor a protected crossing
for pedestrians and bicycles, their way of a
synagogue on the other side of the street. And we have a lot of residents who cross there.

However, the neighborhood has struggled for decades trying to prevent cut through traffic. We sit just north of Silver Spring, lodged between 16th and Georgia and Spring.

And a traffic light will bring traffic straight across Georgia onto Noyes, which is a narrow street, has parking on one side. When the cars are parked there you can't even have two-way traffic on Noyes, the car has to pull aside and let another one go by.

I think that works against the work the community has done for decades now having restricted access at various intersections to have a straight cut through on Noyes Drive. I know there are ways, if you feel you need something there that it could be you could turn right or left, but not go straight across, or it could be, my preference would be if it's just for pedestrians.
Literally anyone in the neighborhood could drive a few blocks and get out at a traffic light if they wanted to on 2nd Avenue or 16th or Spring.

And finally, I would ask the Planning Board to pay careful attention to green space and trees. Getting people out of their cars and walking and biking and supporting local business will depend on many factors.

But green space, walkability and bicycle safety I think will help immensely.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much. Valerie Grussing.

MS. GRUSSING: Hi. Thanks for the opportunity. I'm Valerie Grussing, I'm the president of the Forest Estates Community Association. That's just outside of the beltway on the northeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen.

Our neighborhood consists of almost 700 households and we support the goals of this
plan and the improvements and the preferred alternative.

On a personal note, when we were house shopping four years ago, the Georgia Avenue corridor was actually the factor that nearly deterred us from choosing our neighborhood. We avoid it at all costs.

And a key selling point of our neighborhood is its immediate approximately to the Forest Glen Metro. Which many of us for daily comminuting and would use more if the station were more functional.

We infamously call that intersection the intersection of death, as many of us, including the Holy Cross Hospital, patients and staff, have to cross at two ways onto at rush hour. And SHA has repeatedly found no ideal single configuration to improve safety.

Many neighbors drive less than half a mile to try to park in the adequate metro lot for safety sake.

We enthusiastically thank the
Montgomery County Council for last year funding, 
voting to fund construction of the new pedestrian 
entrance on the northeast side of the 
intersection, and this year defending that 
funding. This new entrance is called for in the 
sector plan and we appreciate the coordination 
that this represents.

Indeed, investment and public 
transportation is one way to accomplish the 
stated goals of the so called Managed Lanes 
Study. The beltway expansion effort, by 
addressing the local congestion and improving 
general liability. Maybe their model will catch 
on.

We're also considered walkable to our 
elementary school, but our kids are bussed a 
crossed Georgia Avenue. A new metro entrance, as 
well as the other improvements of the sector 
plans for a preferred alternative will make our 
community more livable. Literally.

We specifically support the planned 
themes of reconnect, reinvest and re-imagine and
their associated goals. Some of examples are Vision Zero, this is really important to us, multi-modal options, such as public transit, walking and bicycling.

Also encouraging alternatives to single occupancy vehicle traffic to meet the needs of those with limited mobility options. If you've never tried to use Forest Glen Metro or walk along Georgia Avenue sidewalk on or with wheels, I hereby propose the sector plan stroller challenge.

Look for any county or state officials who don't support funding these improvements out on the street would be very good for everyone.

We also support equitable development, including small retail and affordable housing, remedying past environment impacts and protecting against future environment degradation.

And furthermore, enhancing the public realm by providing green infrastructure that meets the needs of all users. A couple of our neighbors have already mentioned at General Getty
Park adjacent to Georgia Avenue is getting all new playground equipment this year thanks to neighbor advocacy.

We host the only farmer's market in a county park every Saturday in the summer. Also, thanks to neighbor initiative.

There are numerous multiple unit dwellings across Georgia Avenue that have no safe way to cross and access any of it. And that's a serious equity issue in our own backyard.

To conclude, one of our neighboring civic association presidents likes to brandish her copy of the Georgia Avenue Sector Plan for 1978, the year I was born.

Although 40 is the new 30, master and sector plans are intended to be revised every ten to 15 years, so let's get this one funded and implemented before it's time to start all over.

We appreciate the Planning Staff's outreach and engagement during this process. We feel really listened to.

We thank the Planning Staff and Board,
supported elected officials and community members
and leaders who have worked so diligently, some
for decades, to craft these improvements and get
the plant to this point.

Although efforts to continue to get
this work funded, Forest Estates Community
supports this plan and its goals.

So commercial for the funding here
remains the sole barrier to the implementation of
this. There's huge benefits in this plan to
commuters, residents and businesses.

And all the neighboring civic and
community associations have been scrambling to
campaign and state officials to make this project
priority number one, as Michelle mentioned, for
funding in Fiscal Year '20.

So if you're listening to or reading
this, go to friendsofforestglen.org for a quick
and easy way you can help.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

Jill Matthews.

MS. MATTHEWS: Hi. My name is Jill
Matthews, I live on Bellevue Boulevard right next to Getty Park. Just a few doors down.

And I just wanted to express my enthusiastic support for this plan. I moved to the area about four years, I think the same time that you did. And for sure the reason we moved here was for the metro.

Also, when we visited the neighborhood, the sense of the community. And I can echo what was said earlier.

Within the community there is tons of walking happening. There's people interacting all of the time. And it's a really great place.

The one thing that's missing is walkability outside and walkability to retail. When I was on maternity leave, I actually walked to the hospital to get a cup of coffee because it was the only place I could go. Yes, desperate times.

(Laughter.)

MS. MATTHEWS: I think we all agreed doing nothing is not an option here. I've also
walked from my area, Getty Park, to the CVS multiple times. And with my son, whose 3 now, in the stroller. I've also walked from his doctor's office to that CVS, down Georgia, across and over 495 to get to CVS.

It's not pleasant. It's possible. I would do it a lot more if it were a better experience.

In addition, I also walk to the metro daily. I've noticed recently that sometimes the signal to cross the metro, to cross Georgia, the walk signal seems to be changing a little bit. So there's a little bit of uncertainly. Sometimes when I get there if there's a pattern that I know, because I commute the same time every day, and sometimes the turn lanes are different.

And a few times the walk light has not even gone on. So it is very unsafe but I do it every day.

The other thing I wanted to mention is, people come off from 495 from out of the
area, they're going into D.C. and this is what they see. And it's not pleasant.

So, even just for some pride in our community, this is what we're presenting to the nation when they're coming in to visit D.C. And I think it's unfortunate that that's the face that we're putting forward. So thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

Sheldon Fishman.

MR. FISHMAN: Yes, I'd like to echo all of the words that have been said up to now. My name is Sheldon Fishman and I've lived in Silver Spring for 45 years. And we've raised our four children here.

I want to thank you for coming to visit the neighborhood this morning. I appreciate that. And I appreciate the effort that was spent on putting together this sector plan.

The Staff has identified some terrific opportunities for development that will enhance our community.
I've participated in several of the earlier meetings. This draft, I can assure you, was revised to address several concerns that were heard. And there was even a little progress on concerns I raised.

I'm going to use the remainder of my time to complain.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: Oh no. You're the last one, don't do it.

(Laughter.)

MR. FISHMAN: And offer suggestions for improvements.

COMMISSIONER FANI-GONZALEZ: Okay.

MR. FISHMAN: So, you heard, and I'll do it in sequence and according to the plan here, so Page 81. You heard it was ugly.

It is really ugly.

(Laughter.)

MR. FISHMAN: And you guys know good design, this is terrible design, right? And this is what the people coming from D.C. into
Montgomery County, the first thing they see.

And if you're sympathetic to this, let me ask you, do you have a pawnbroker, vape store and cash for gold in a quarter mile of your house? And if not, we don't want it here in our neighborhood either.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Well, I do, because I live down the block.

(Laughter.)

MR. FISMAN: You're the only one that can say that. It's an improvement over the pawnshop, I'll admit that. Maybe.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: There were adult and kid videos. Or so I'm told.

MR. FISMAN: Okay.

(Laughter.)

MR. FISMAN: So, it really is not the face that we want for Montgomery County.

The second thing I'd like to say is, you've already heard so much about traffic, here's a car wash. So what I'd like to do is ask you, there is something in the plan to say, to
change the zoning, but I'm asking you to be bolder and find other ways to really discourage the current looking and feel, discourage the kind of businesses that are here and encourage alternatives.

The same thing is there's, here's the problem with the traffic, well, here's the car wash on Georgia Avenue. And, again, I would urge you to find some arrows in your quiver beyond zoning because it, you've seen what happens when the cars backup on Georgia Avenue.

So we need, just a little hanging fruit that will actually make an improvement to the traffic.

And the last point I'll make is, if you can't make it better, please don't make it worse. We have two lanes going down, this is from Georgia Avenue onto 16th Street, and they're still backing up behind that.

But if you change that from two lanes to one lane and change it from a 45 degree angle to whatever it is to a 90 degree angle, it ain't
going to make it better. So you probably ought to make it worse.

And with that, I thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you very much. And thanks everyone for coming. Remember, the record is open so please send an email to, I believe its mcc-chair@mncppc.org.

Or you can talk to our many very able and eager staff members who will help you out. And take your input directly. Thank you all.

(Off microphone comment.)

COMMISSIONER PATTERSON: June 25th.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: And the work session, first work session, will be June 20th. And you're all welcome to that as well.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 8:22 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Montgomery County Planning Board

Before: MNCPPC

Date: 05-30-19

Place: Silver Spring, MD

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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Court Reporter

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